

Exhibit No. 3Date 3-23-07**Testimony for HB198: Increase CHIP Dental Benefit, Bill No. HB198**
Sponsored by Representative William Jones.

Chairman Weinberg and members of the committee: For the record my name is Moe Wosepka, I currently serve as Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. The Montana Catholic Conference is the public policy arm for the two Catholic Bishops in Montana, from the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings and the Diocese of Helena.

The Catholic Church in its social justice efforts expresses a preferential option for the poor. Our faith reflects God's special concern for the poor and the vulnerable and calls us to make their needs our first priority in public life. Economic decisions should be assessed on whether they protect the dignity of the human person.

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the poor and homeless, as well as those in our nursing homes, prisons and jails. I have been allowed to meet the families, and the children in these homes. They have taught me much about the difficulties of being poor in Montana today.

This bill is about Children and specifically dental benefits for children. It expands the benefit for those on CHIP to get some of the care they need.

We all know the first impression is a very powerful message. A child that has bad teeth knows that, and will hide his or her teeth by not smiling, by not talking, by not participating. We also know that lack of preventive care leads to much more difficult and costly repairs for adults. These same children will face problems getting jobs as they become adults. I have seen first hand, clients being turned down for jobs because of their unsightly dental problems.

This is another of those pay now or pay latter problems. We need to help low income families with health care and health access if we want to help families lift themselves out of poverty.

We thank Representative Jones for bringing this bill forward, and urge a do pass. And thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for your time and attention.

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